

DCI Speech
at the
Golden Plate Awards
Owensboro, Kentucky - 23 June 1978

I think in my life I have been in some tough situations, but to follow Steve Cauthen and Debbie is just too much. I feel a little like those two bulls that were walking down the road over here the other day. They came across a great big field of heifers and the young bull said to the old bull, "let's run over and get those heifers." The old bull looked him in the eye and said, "let's walk over and get them all."

Some of you have asked me in the last day, how I came into this job, why did I take it? So, I thought I would tell you just how it came about. I was 31 years a military officer, I was in a pleasant command in Naples, Italy. On the 2nd of February last year, the telephone rang. They said to me the President of the United States wants to see you in Washington tomorrow. Well, that had never happened to me before so I got to Washington in a hurry. At 11:35 the next morning I was ushered into the oval office. I was nervous. I shouldn't have been nervous because the man in the oval office was my naval academy classmate. I hadn't known him at the naval academy but only a couple of years before I patted him on the back and said, Jimmy, you're doing a great job as Governor of Georgia. But, I was nervous and I went in and said, yes sir, Mr. President. I shouldn't have been nervous because I also had thought all the way across the Atlantic what the President was going to ask me to do and I knew I was ready. I knew I was prepared, I had 31 years of experience and I knew whether we needed aircraft carriers or B-1's or tanks. I knew just what the right strategy for the military posture in Europe was and there I sat as the President said something about Central Intelligence Agency. I looked at

him with my heart in my stomach and I said -- well almost. I said but sir, I can do much more good for you as a military officer. I have been trained for this, I am prepared for this. Then the President of the United States said something about, Central Intelligence. Well, when you have tried to serve your country for 31 years, when you have in effect been working for the President of the United States for 31 years -- and this is the first time you have met him, this is the first time you have been asked to do something specific -- there is no way that you can say no, or even maybe. So, I said, yes sir. As I said it, there flashed across the screen in front of my mind, a picture of those 31 years, of a career of 31 years of professionalism. It was gone. But I didn't have time to stop and think and look back and wonder what it might have been like if the call had been for something else. I had to get down to the job. How do you go about a new appointment like this?

Well, I went about it by asking myself three questions. First, do we really need intelligence, how important is it for our country? Not the kind you're talking about -- I'm talking about spooky intelligence. And as I looked at it I said, yes, I think we need good intelligence information today, more than any time since World War II. Today, the margin for error is less than ever before. We used to be the number one military power. We used to be totally independent economically. We used to be the nation that set the pace politically, and many just followed us. Those days have gone and the leverage today of having good information when we have military parity and economic interdependence and hundreds of totally independent political entities around the world, is much greater than ever before. Would that we didn't have to get our information through intelligence methods. But, we are lucky in this country, we are an open society. But around the world there are many closed societies and those

societies and what they do economically, politically and militarily can have a major impact on us and our standard of living, on our type of life. We have to know what is going on.

My second question was how do we get good intelligence? Well, when you dissect intelligence it is two things -- it's getting information, getting data, and then it is pulling it together, analyzing it, taking little clues and piecing them into a puzzle and interpreting it. Now, if you want to be good at the interpretation, you have to have good smart people. You go out and look as we do every year on a 150 college campuses for people like you, four years from now. You want them from all kinds of disciplines, but you want people on the edge of their disciplines who are breaking new trails. Then you bring them together in a competitive type of environment, because nobody puts those pieces together precisely and perfectly. Interpretations are always different and in our free society you want freedom to have different views come forward so that you can bring them out so the decision-maker can see what choices you have. Now, on the other side of the house, collecting the data, it is a different story because it is a risky, costly business. You don't want so much competition, you want it well organized. There are two ways you collect information, one is by what we call human agents or spies. They have been with us since Jericho at least, they will be with us for the indefinite future. The other is by what we call technical means. Photographs and signals intercepts. Waves going through the air right here. These are technical means of collecting information. The balance today, between the technical means and the human means is constantly changing, we are never in a state of equilibrium, we are constantly finding new ways to

bring them together. But both methods are needed and they are complementary.

That leads to my third question: what are the risks in doing this? Is it possible in the process of defending our ideals and our institutions through collecting intelligence that we can in fact, undermine them. And my answer was yes. Yes, it is risky when you have secrecy in an open, democratic society like ours. It is risky when you can possibly interfere with the privacy of our citizens. And so, as I assessed the horizon before me, as I staggered out from under this new responsibility, it looked to me like it was my turn to create a new process of intelligence for our country: One that would prevent abuses of the past on the one hand, but on the other hand would insure the successes of the past, and we are moving in that direction today. We are creating a new American process of secret intelligence in an open democratic society. I believe we have the finest intelligence ever for our country today. But we have it with more controls, more oversight, more exposure to the public than ever before. It is going to be two or three years before we have settled down in these new procedures and until we are sure that we don't have so much oversight that we are crippled or so little control that abuses can recur. It is an absolutely exciting challenge, one with long term import for our country. I feel very privileged that the President happened to call on me that February day, a year and a half ago because the opportunity for contribution is great. It challenges me, it thrills me, I hope in your career some day you too will put the bit in your teeth and accept the challenge of contributing directly to this government of our wonderful country. It is great to be with you. Thank you very much.

Questions and Answer Session - Golden Plate Award

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: Do I feel that President Carter's recent Executive Order limits covert activities too much? Covert activities as we define them are trying to influence events in foreign countries. It is really not an intelligence function, it is a function assigned to the Central Intelligence Agency from time to time. The Executive Order puts very strict controls on this so the Central Intelligence Agency chief cannot go off and conduct covert action, political action, interfere in other countries on his own. No, I don't think it controls us too much. I happen to think that covert action is less applicable to our country today than it has been before but I think we can operate under the rules that exist and those rules give the country assurance that we are doing only what the constituted authorities want us to do.

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: What are we trying to do to prevent the release of information from our former agents to "60 Minutes," and books and things like this? This is a very serious problem for our country because it appears to the people and the rest of the world that we cannot keep a secret. We are going to have cooperation from no one in our intelligence activities and we will dry up. We are in court today with one of these men who violated his contract with us. We hope that we will get a ruling that will hold up our secrecy agreement. We are doing everything we can internally to close the leaks so these pieces of information can't get out. I am pleading with you, and with other audiences to whom I talk, that we must have the restoration of some modicum of confidence in your appointed and elected officials instead of the constant assumption that they are all there doing the wrong thing. But I assure you I believe today there are adequate checks on all of us; adequate oversight procedures that you don't have to just take us on faith alone.

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: How much is the CIA subject to Congressional investigation? Part of this oversight I have been describing in general terms is a committee in the House of Representatives and another committee in the Senate dedicated solely to oversight of the intelligence process. It is a very worthwhile function. They keep close track on us, we keep them informed. We get feedback from them as to what they think the people of this country want. It keeps us from being isolated. We get good ideas and suggestions from them. At the present time it is working out very well. We are now in the process of codifying into law the procedures by which we will work with these committees. That is going to be a very critical step in this process of the next two or three years, I have described to you.

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: Earlier today I was asked whether we are better than the KGB and I said that we don't put as much manpower into the human intelligence collection that I described to you. They are very profligate in that area and they put tremendous effort into it. In our society that is not quite appropriate. We are better than they on the technical collection that I just described to you because we are more sophisticated, we are more advanced than they and certainly we are better than they in the analysis interpretation because I don't believe that in a closed authoritarian society you can do that free interpretation, that competitive analysis that we do, nearly as well.

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: How important is it for the CIA to keep a close watch on Russia and Cuba in Africa? It is a very high priority for us because the precedent of the Soviet and Cuban successes in Angola and in Ethiopia could lead to an over zealousness and over eagerness on their part. We must at least be aware of this and alert our decision-makers to what steps we think they are going to take next in that troubled area of Africa where the kind of appeal which they give is military aid, whereas we are looking to help improve the lives and standards of people and it is a very difficult competition.

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: Has the coordination of intelligence agencies resulted in better intelligence gathering? This young man is referring to the fact that last January the President gave me additional authority to bring together the collection ends of these things: the human and the technical that I described to you. I think it is working better. I think we will complement each other rather than compete and rather than underlap. You see there are many agencies in our government -- in the Defense Department, in the CIA and elsewhere -- that collect this information and I have somewhat more authority today than I did before to insure that we all work as a team and that is our primary thrust today in the intelligence community -- is to be a real team operation.

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: The question is, he was surprised that there was a revelation of the recent -- what I call egregious actions of the Soviet Union -- in tunneling into our embassy in Moscow and planting antennas in it. The information came out originally as a leak. An American newsman in Moscow somehow got this story after it had been leaked into our press. The Soviets then made a deliberate press release on it. It had not been -- up until that point at least -- our intent to release it until we knew more about it and had the facts sorted out.

Question: Inaudible)

Answer: Is assassination ever justified? There is an express Presidential Directive that I and the intelligence people of our country will neither plan nor execute any assassination. The first half of your question was can assassination happen? Well, if it does I am going to get fired as well as somebody get killed. I can't say it cannot happen, but all I can say is that there is a firm rule against it, including planning it. So the chances are very, very high that it cannot happen and that is what this oversight process is about. There is another oversight board I didn't describe, which reports only to the President of the United States. Any member of my staff can report to that board without going through me and say that fellow Turner is up to something bad. If somebody in the CIA even hears people talking about assassinations and they are conscientious they will go to that board and say look into it.

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: The KGB tortures prisoners, is that justified? No, I don't think that is justified and we do not participate in that kind of thing. These are the difficult lines that we face, difficult boundaries that we must draw. There is no question that because we are a free, open and democratic society we are at disadvantages vis-a-vis the Soviet Union with respect to the collection of intelligence. But I am suggesting to you tonight that not one of us here would want to trade those advantages to have a closed, a repressive, an authoritarian society on our side. We will accept those disadvantages and we will do better than they will.

Thank you.